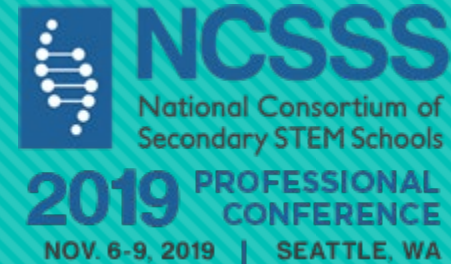


# Educator Stress: Finding Solutions to Combat Negativity, Exhaustion, and Burnout

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Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy

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# Who We Are

Kevin Kusy

- Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor
- School Counselor
- Doctoral Student
- Future Educator

Sarah O'Leary-Driscoll

- Educator
- Researcher
- Mental Health officianado

# Habits of Mind of a Teacher

What are habits of mind necessary for effective teaching?

- high levels of uncertainty
- attention to others
- mental flexibility
- emotion regulation
- relationship management skills
- working with conflict creatively
- being resilient after conflicts
- practicing forgiveness and relationship re-engagement after conflict.

Easy, right?

# Current Statistics Around Teacher Retention

## Stress:

- Between 25% and 30% of teachers rate their jobs as either very or extremely stressful
- Up to 30 percent of teachers leave in first five years
- 84 percent leave voluntarily
- Only 26% of teachers—compared to 54% of other public employees—continue to work until the normal retirement age

## Reasons for Leaving:

- Lack of resources
- Low pay
- Poor political environment
- Poor preparation for job
- Too much teaching to the test and emphasis on testing students

## Does this sound like you?

- You're a teacher who puts everyone else's needs before your own
- You never have enough time and energy for everything, and only what's left over belongs to you
- You know you need to prioritize self-care but just haven't been able to create habits that you can stick with long-term

*"It's not hard to make the assumption that the only way to be successful as a teacher is to put your students' achievement before everything else in your life. If the kids — that is, other people's kids — aren't your #1 priority, if you're not working 24/7 for them, then you're letting everyone down and your students won't be successful."*

# What we deal with

## Stress

- The weight of expectations, particularly when responsible for children, can lead to experiencing pressure or tension
  - Resulting from demanding circumstances
- Can be motivational or detrimental

## Burnout

- Chronic feelings of emotional exhaustion or fatigue
- Negative attitudes towards students
- Lack of feeling accomplished on the job

## Compassion Fatigue

- Excessive caring of others
  - In helping fields, associated with shared trauma

# Why Does it Happen?

We:

- Tend to be high achievers, Compulsive, and Perfectionistic
- We think busy is normal.
- We don't realize how dire the situation really is.
- Have a hard time saying no to people and things we care about.

We deal with:

- Exhaustion
- Imbalanced personal life
- Being Overloaded with work
- Lack of support systems
- Frustrations with stagnation

# Screening Assessment

Please take the assessment being handed out

- Please take a minute to reflect on your score
  - What are the overall scores?
  - What areas are higher/lower than others, if any?



Instruction: Below you find a series of statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the scale, please indicate the degree of your agreement by selecting the number that corresponds with each statement

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I always find new and interesting aspects in my work.	1	2	3	4
2. There are days when I feel tired before I arrive at work.	1	2	3	4
3. It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way.	1	2	3	4
4. After work, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better.	1	2	3	4
5. I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well.	1	2	3	4
6. Lately, I tend to think less at work and do my job almost mechanically.	1	2	3	4
7. I find my work to be a positive challenge.	1	2	3	4
8. During my work, I often feel emotionally drained.	1	2	3	4
9. Over time, one can become disconnected from this type of work.	1	2	3	4
10. After working, I have enough energy for my leisure activities.	1	2	3	4
11. Sometimes I feel sickened by my work tasks.	1	2	3	4
12. After my work, I usually feel worn out and weary.	1	2	3	4
13. This is the only type of work that I can imagine myself doing.	1	2	3	4
14. Usually, I can manage the amount of my work well.	1	2	3	4
15. I feel more and more engaged in my work.	1	2	3	4
16. When I work, I usually feel energized.	1	2	3	4

Please choose the alternative that best describes your situation (estimation from previous month)

Completely disagree 1                      Disagree 2                      Partly disagree 3                      Partly agree 4                      Agree 5                      Completely agree 6

1. I am snowed under with work. (EXH)
2. I feel dispirited at work and I think of leaving my job. (CYN)
3. I often sleep poorly because of the circumstances at work. (EXH)
4. I frequently question the value of my work. (INAD)
5. I feel that I have gradually less to give. (CYN)
6. My expectations to my job and to my performance have reduced. (INAD)
7. I constantly have bad conscience because my work forces me to neglect my close friends and relatives. (EXH)
8. I feel that I am gradually losing interest in my customers or my other employees. (CYN)
9. Honestly I felt more appreciated at work before. (INAD)

# Discussion

*Please connect with a small group around you and share some of your thoughts with others*

- What did you find out about your personal burnout scoring?
- Did anything surprise you from the assessment?
- What challenges stand in your way in improving your scores? Which ones are out of your hands?
- What kinds of supports do you need to help you? How can you help support each other?

# Sharing Perspectives and Ideas

# Importance: Research

The relevant question asks participants to rate to what extent health and/or mental health problems have affected their productivity at work from 0 (no effect on my work) to 10 (completely prevented me from working) over the previous four working weeks. Measured as “presenteeism”

- Low teacher well being = high presenteeism
- High teacher presenteeism = lower student well being
- Poor teacher well being = higher absenteeism
- Connection between teacher presenteeism, student well being, and psychological difficulties in students
- Poor well being and depressive symptoms in teachers = less able to engage in positive classroom and behavior management or be more likely to display negative emotions or behaviors

# How can we Improve?

## Organizational level

- Addressing student mental health
  - Research states better teacher wellbeing with better student wellbeing
  - Utilize parents and community resources
- Develop a mentoring program or support structure for faculty and staff
- Address challenges faculty face (excess duties, too little time, lack of support etc) to support their well being

# How do we Improve?

## In the Classroom: some ideas

- Breathe!
- Accept imperfection
- Talk about it –
  - Admit challenges
  - Ask your students how they are
  - be an example and a collaborator on hard days; “WE can do this”
- Take a break; side step in conversation; stretch
- Plan ahead so time can be spent working smarter, not harder
- Use class time creatively to lessen some of the out of class work work for you (peer review, etc)

## Sarah's 5 Step Program:

- Take a moment to quiet the “Squirrels”
- Consider your goals for the day
- Look at yourself, your attitude, the emotion you are exuding, and your carriage
- Look at yours students and sense their “vibe”
- Engage!

# How do we improve?

## Personal

- Develop a self-care plan
- Addressing own mental health
  - Take time to reflect and learn about self
  - Make use of supports available
  - Realize when “typical” teacher stress becomes something more serious like depression or other conditions and get appropriate help

## 4 STEPS TO CREATING HABITS OF SELF-CARE

1. Build in rest as a catalyst for productivity, not a break from it.
2. Streamline your schedule by doing fewer things, better.
3. Pair a self-care habit with your regular routine so it becomes automatic.
4. Focus on the habit of the habit: value right actions over right results.

# Self Care

Self-care is any activity that we do deliberately in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health. It is key to improved mood and reduced anxiety and important for a good relationship with oneself and others.

It should be:

Something you do not have to force yourself to do (do not enjoy it)

Something you want to and can realistically maintain permanently

Something that has a meaningful impact on your well being



# How do we improve?

## Mindfulness

### Training:

- explicit instruction on emotions and stress, and on how to use mindfulness to regulate emotions and stress more effectively

*Teaching, learning and leading may not be solely emotional practices, but they are always irretrievably emotional in character, in a good way or a bad way, by design or default. Studies showing that mindfulness training (MT) with adults can help with **stress reduction, emotion regulation, health, and prosocial dispositions**. This can **better prepare them for the demands of the job** and help them to lead by example.*

**Mindfulness**

## Dictionary

Search for a word



### mind·ful·ness

/ˈmɪn(d)f(ə)lnəs/

*noun*

1. the quality or state of being conscious or aware of something.  
"their mindfulness of the wider cinematic tradition"
2. a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.



Translations, word origin, and more definitions

From Oxford

[Feedback](#)

being intensely aware of what you're sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment

a way to respond to our difficulties, by being with them instead of being them

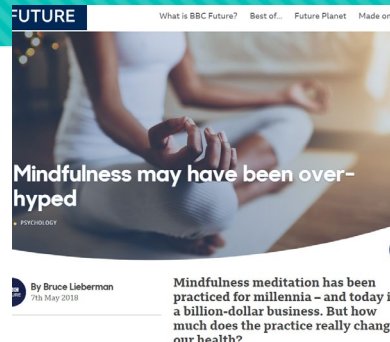


In the 2015 study, the researchers found that three days of intensive mindfulness meditation training **reduced functional connectivity** between the right amygdala, associated with the fight-or-flight stress response, and the subgenual anterior cingulate cortex, which plays a role in modulating emotions.

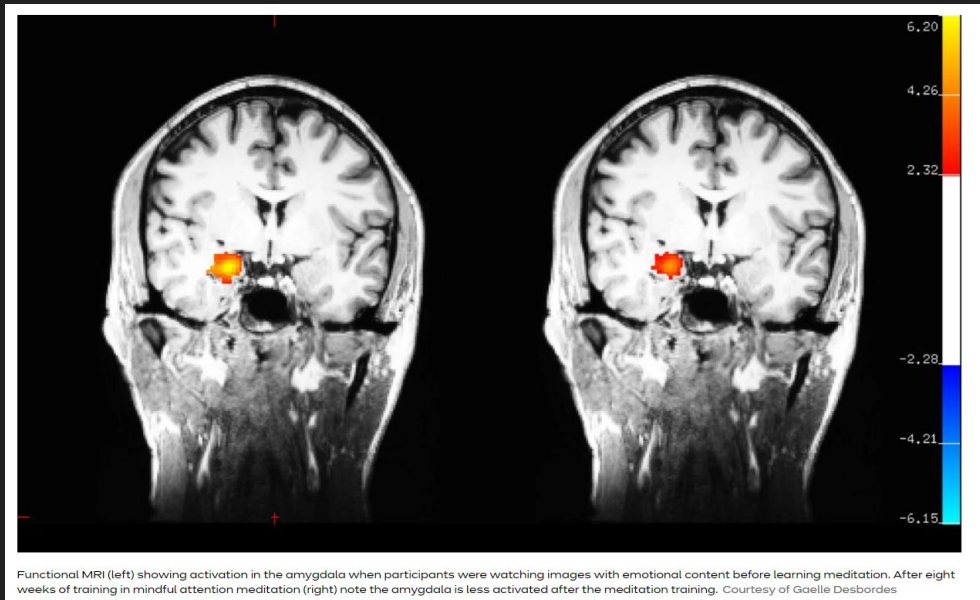
In the 2016 study, the researchers found that three days of intensive mindfulness meditation training led to increased connectivity between the default mode network, a network of regions engaged when the brain is at rest, and parts of the prefrontal cortex involved in regulating stress. The study also found that meditation led to **reduced levels of interleukin-6**, a biomarker in the blood for systemic inflammation that's elevated in high-stress populations.

King and his colleagues showed similarly promising results in 23 combat veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq with **post-traumatic stress disorder** in 2016. Brain scans before and after mindfulness-based group therapy revealed an increase in resting-state connectivity between a network in the brain that allows people to control their attention and other parts of the brain involved in rumination and spontaneous thought. This particular connectivity has been seen in

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20180502-does-mindfulness-really-improve-our-health>



# Research on Mindfulness



<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/04/harvard-researchers-study-how-mindfulness-may-change-the-brain-in-depressed-patients/>

## Effectiveness of a Mindfulness Education Program in Primary Health Care Professionals: A Pragmatic Controlled Trial

Andrés Martín Asuero PhD, Jenny Moix Queraltó PhD, Enriqueta Pujol-Ribera MD✉, Anna Berenguera PhD, MSc, Teresa Rodríguez-Blanco, Ronald M. Epstein PhD

First published: 19 March 2014 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/chp.21211> | Citations: 7

[Full Text Finder](#)

## Introduction

Burnout is a very prevalent type of stress among health professionals. It affects their well-being, performance, and attitude toward patients. This study assessed the effectiveness of a training program for primary health care professionals designed to reduce burnout and mood disturbance, increase empathy, and develop mindfulness.

## Results

The intervention group improved in the 4 scales measured. The magnitude of the change was large in total mood disturbance (difference between groups -7.1; standardized effect-size [SES] 1.15) and mindfulness (difference between groups 11; SES 0.9) and moderate in the burnout (difference between groups -7; SES 0.74) and empathy scales (difference between groups 5.2; SES 0.71). No significant differences were found in the control group.

## Discussion

Our study supports the use of mindfulness-based programs as part of continuing professional education to reduce and prevent burnout, promote positive attitudes among health professionals, strengthen patient-provider relationships, and enhance well-being.

# Dance in the Rain: Leading with Compassion, Vitality, and Mindfulness in Education

## Jerome T. Murphy

### Notice

The objective of all dedicated department employees should be to thoroughly analyze all situations, anticipate all problems prior to their occurrence, have answers for these problems, and move swiftly to solve these problems when called upon...

However...

When you're up to your a\*\* in alligators, it is difficult to remind yourself that your original objective was to drain the swamp. -found in the office of an experienced leader in the state department of education, referenced in this book

***To be successful at what we do, we need sustained effectiveness, even in adverse conditions. By improving our own well being, through things like practicing mindfulness, we aid or effectiveness.***

# Dance in the Rain: Leading with Compassion, Vitality, and Mindfulness in Education

## Jerome T. Murphy

### My Dance @ a Glance:

**Mind your values:** take action inspired by what matters most to you

**Yield to now:** Slow down and focus on the present moment

**Disentangle from upsets:** Mentally step back, observing and making room for upsets

**Allow unease:** Open up to upsets, even if you dislike them

**Nourish Yourself:** Engage in activities that replenish your energy and restore your perspective

**Cherish Self Compassion:** Give yourself the kindness you need and deserve

**Express feelings wisely:** Carefully reveal your human side so that you can build trusting relationships

*Similar to the scientific method, this is rarely a linear process! It takes continual adjustment.*



# Dance in the Rain: Leading with Compassion, Vitality, and Mindfulness in Education

## Jerome T. Murphy

### Self Defeating Behaviors to avoid: The 3 R's

**Resistance:** “what we resist, persists”, it is easy to use coping mechanisms such as suppression, escape, and avoidance when we experience discomfort

**Rumination:** it's important to find the balance between focused effort and obsessive thoughts, brooding, stewing, or negatively focusing on the source of discomfort, particularly if it's in the past

**Rebuke:** the harsh counterpart to self criticism, this leads us to make false comparisons, such as “what's the matter with me? they all seem to be doing fine”. This can lead to isolation and make us feel inferior or like an imposter. It's the “measure up monster” where we compare other's outside (what we see) with our own inside.



# STEALTH MINDFULNESS

Even if you're on the move all day, there are still plenty of opportunities to practice mindfulness.



## SHOWERING:

Let your shower take over your senses. Listen to the water. Feel the water on your skin. Inhale the steam and smell of the soap. Massage your scalp while shampooing. Leave feeling refreshed.



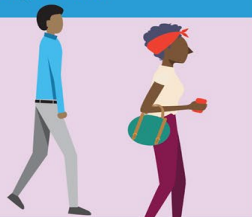
## BED-MAKING:

As a moving meditation, mindfully breathe while smoothing and tucking your sheets. Make your bed your absolute and only focus for a few moments.



## GETTING DRESSED:

Be fully present in choosing and putting on your clothes. Take in the colors and feel the textures of each garment. Bring your attention to every detail, like buttons, zippers, and laces.



## WALKING:

Concentrate on the physical sensations of walking and how every step feels as you raise your legs and set your feet on the ground. Bring your focus to every step and repeat "left, right" with every step.



## WAITING IN LINE:

Take a few deep breaths to center yourself while waiting. Acknowledge your immediate surroundings and the presence of others while wishing them well.



## EATING:

While eating, let all your attention go to how your food tastes, how the aroma hits your nose, and the texture inside your mouth.

DE STRESS  
MONDAY

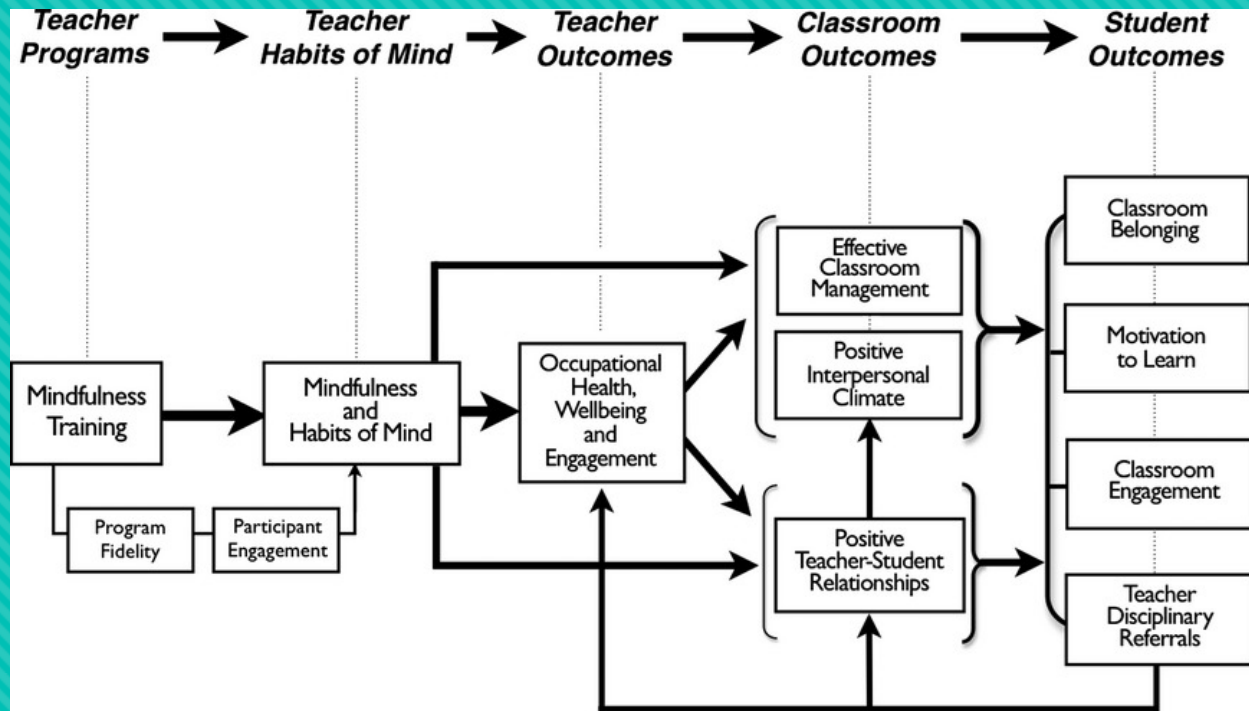
<https://www.destressmonday.org/mindfulness-101-practice/>

The ideal:

- practice mindfulness everyday for at least 6 months
- spend at least 20 minutes in specific meditation
- become the perfect model of mindfulness for your students

The real:

- when you can, where you can
- with practice should become more a state of mind than scheduled task
- demonstrate to students that continued effort is important to improving emotional well being.



Mindfulness Training for students can add to the success.

Mindfulness Training Model for Teachers and Students

# Discussion:

1. How do you think being more 'mindful' might help improve or prevent feelings of burnout?
2. There are a lot of things outside our control as teachers, what are a few things you CAN work on for yourself?

# Your ideas and Questions?

Please share!

# Contact Us

We will submit an updated pwpt with additional resources for the NCSSS app.

FB Group: Teacher Wellness: Research, Resources, and Ranting

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/teacherwellnessR3/>

If you would like to email us:

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Sarah [soleary@imsa.edu](mailto:soleary@imsa.edu)